

# BUILDING SAFETY NEWS

PUBLISHED BY BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SERVICES DIVISION

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## Work Load

- 1500 permits were issued in the last month. These included 32 new Single and Multi-Family Residential buildings and 16 new commercial buildings.
- Plan Review turn-around status: Residential, 15 days; Commercial 30 days.
- Inspection status: 24 hour turnaround

## Contact Information:

### Office Phone Contact Information

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## STAFFING ENHANCEMENTS FOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Approvals were given to fill several new positions and current vacancies this month. Six new positions have been added and four vacancies will be filled. The increase in staff is the City's response to an increased demand for permits and inspections over the last several years. The following positions are now being recruited:

- ⇒ Senior Codes Specialist (2 positions: Electrical and Plumbing)
- ⇒ Permit Specialist (3 positions)
- ⇒ Senior Permit Specialist (2 positions)
- ⇒ Permit Technician
- ⇒ Zoning Enforcement Specialist III
- ⇒ Support Technician

"The added staff will allow the Division of Building Construction Services to meet the ever-increasing demand for permits. It will also allow the Pretty Lake Building Safety Office to remain open on a more consistent basis", said Lynn Underwood, Code Official.



Trader nears "top out"

## NORFOLK BEGINS PRE-CONSTRUCTION MEETINGS FOR LARGE BUILDING PROJECTS

The Building Construction Division will begin hosting pre-construction meetings for large or complex projects. For commercial buildings that exceed 12,000 ft<sup>2</sup> or 4 stories in height, or have 1600 amp services, or have significant Special Inspection requirements, the Code Official along with the Team Leaders will meet with the contractor, owner-developer, Registered Design Professional, Special Inspector and the Project Superintendent to discuss details of the inspection process. Included in the discussion will be the following:

- ◆ Contact information
- ◆ Plan changes
- ◆ Fences, safety, parking
- ◆ Inspection procedures
- ◆ Inspection guidelines
- ◆ 3rd party inspections
- ◆ Special Inspections
- ◆ Fire protection of site
- ◆ Final Inspection & C.O.

The meetings will be scheduled during plan review stage and will be held before permit is issued.

The goal of the pre-

construction meetings is to improve communication between all parties in the project and to set out the City of Norfolk's expectations for the duration of construction. New code requirements, streamlined office procedures, policies that improve understanding of the code as well as construction safety all will be included in the discussions in these meetings. Being a work-in-progress, improvements may be made to the structure of these meetings. "We expect to learn and improve this meeting with feedback from all participants", said Lynn Underwood, Code Official.

In Norfolk, the City Council enacted a proclamation declaring that May 7-13, 2006 is **Building Safety Week** in the City.

## City Staff to teach at State Code Academy

Vernell Woods, Deputy Code Official is already an "Advanced Instructor" with the Jack Proctor Virginia Building Code Academy. Having passed train-the-trainer series of classes, Woods has since taught in several classes throughout Virginia. He and Anthony Anderson, Team Leader for Permits will teach a class in the Tidewater area in June. Anthony Anderson and Steve Sheppard have been accepted as candidates for the Train-the-Trainer series of classes to be held later this year. Tony Anderson and Leon Yoder, have already assisted the Deputy Code Official in teaching the Non-Structural Plan Review class in central Virginia. Steve Sheppard is expected to focus his training on the inspection aspects of the Mechanical Code. The City of Norfolk will have four instructors with the Academy.

### Organization Meeting Schedule

#### VBCOA Region 8

June 15, 2006 Sammy / Nicks  
August 17, 2006 "  
October 19, 2006 "  
December 14, 2006 "

#### VBCOA Chapter

Oct 22-24, Annual, Staunton, Virginia

#### IAEI Eastern

June 13 Chapter meeting Hampton

#### IAEI Chapter

June 25-27 Annual meeting Northern Va

#### VPMIA

April 6-8, Training, Staunton  
August 4-5, Training, Graves Mountain

#### VFPA

May 22-24, Annual Training, Va. Beach

#### VCCA

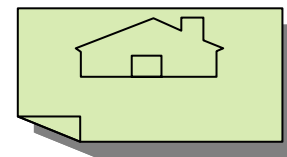
May 17 Region Meeting Va. Beach  
June 2 Chapter meeting, Collinsville, Va

# BUILDING SAFETY WEEK 2006

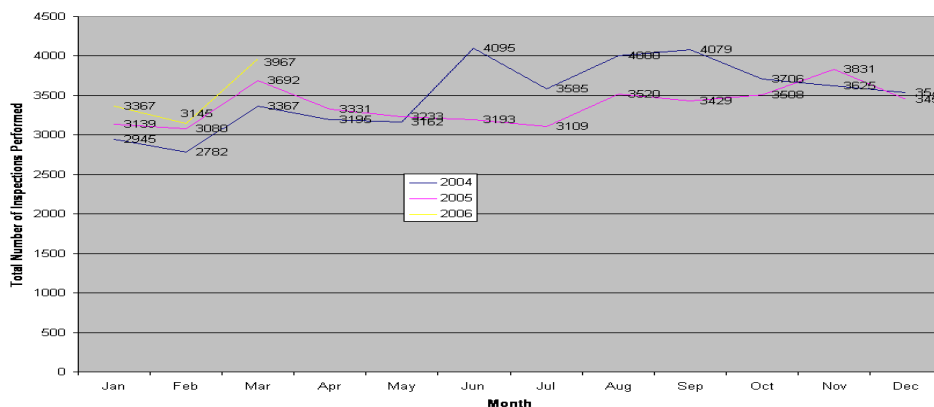
Building Safety Week is celebrated May 7-13, 2006 to recognize the importance of making homes and buildings safe places where people can live, work and play. Sponsored by the **International Code Council Foundation**, Building Safety Week was first observed in 1980. The theme of Building Safety Week 2006, "Building a Safer World Together," reflects the importance of getting everyone involved in the prevention of safety and security hazards.

This web site provides information to educate the **public** and **children** about building safety. It also includes **resources** for building safety and fire prevention professionals to use in educating communities about building safety throughout the year. **The ICC Foundation**. The International Code Council Foundation supports building safety and fire prevention across America and around the world.

The Foundation promotes stronger, safer communities through education programs that save lives and protect properties. ICC Foundation is a subsidiary of **International Code Council (ICC)**. In Norfolk, the City Council will enact a proclamation declaring that May 7-13, 2006 is Building Safety Week in the City.



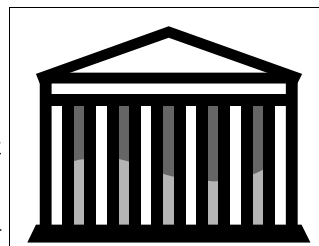
Total Inspections Performed by Month for a Three Year Period



## DEMAND FOR PERMITS AND INSPECTIONS REMAINS STRONG

Demand for building permits remains high even during the spring season. The month of March set another record, exceeding the previous three March figures for inspection activity. 3697 inspections were conducted during this time period. Normally, this time period is marked by an increase, but this volume is unprecedented. This year, March's inspection numbers matched or even exceeded some summer month's

activity level. In addition, permit activity was only 87 less than an all time monthly record. 1318 permits were issued last month and included 325 permits for residential buildings. During this same time pe-



Permit Activity; plan review, fees, and inspections set new highs

riod, plan review conducted approximately 289 reviews of construction documents and issued permits for construction with a total valuation of over \$34 Million bringing in approximately \$182,000 in revenue.

## TEAM LEADER RETIRES FROM CITY OF NORFOLK

Bernard Boomer, after 29 years of service has announced his retirement from the City. Mr. Boomer, Team Leader for Building Inspectors came to work for the City in May of 1977 as an operating engineer for Community Facilities, then in 1984 became a Mechanical inspector, becoming a Combination Residential Inspector in 1988 before achieving his current supervisory position. "Bernard has always been a rock solid supervisor earning the respect and trust of his inspectors.", according to Lynn Underwood, Code Official. "He's always here very early in the morning preparing for the day", he continued. Bernard has served as the Department's unofficial photographer, taking excellent pictures of construction projects.

Although he is retiring from the City of Norfolk, he will remain in the field of building safety taking a position with Newport News until his "real" retirement in a few years to come. He is looking forward to spending more time with his family; Alexis, Tori, Bryan and of course his wife, Cheryl, the true loves of his life. His parting quote: "I am thankful to God for all the friends and acquaintances I have gathered over the years." We will all miss his friendship and smiling face!



## CODE OFFICIAL SPEAKS TO PROFESSIONAL BUILDERS AND BUILDING OWNERS

The City of Norfolk's Code Official spoke to the Associated General Contractor's Association as well as the Building Owner's and Manager's Association in April. Lynn Underwood spoke to AGC and BOMA regarding several topics including the impact of the 2003 IBC on their business and future code adoptions.

In addition, the following topics were covered:

⇒ International Existing Building Code

Virginia adopted this model code as the Virginia Rehabilitation Code. This allows for the use and re-use of older buildings in Norfolk, making compliance easier than new construction.

⇒ Pre-Construction Meetings

The City of Norfolk will begin hosting pre-construction meetings for large or complex projects. The meetings will improve communication between all parties.

⇒ ISO Rating

The City of Norfolk recently received an excellent rating for Building Code Enforcement.

### *Staff appointed to national committees*

*Vernell Woods and Ralston McInnis were recently appointed to the ICC International Property Maintenance Code Committee. In addition, Lynn Underwood was appointed to ICC's IRC Mechanical/Plumbing Code Committee as well. Woods and McInnis are Board Members of the Virginia Building and Code Official's Association. Underwood is Sergeant at Arms and a Board member as well.*

### 2006 I Code Adoption Planned

The Department of Housing and Community Development is preparing to reviewing the 2006 I Codes for possible adoption in Virginia as early as 2007. The Department will introduce the proposal to the Board for Housing and Community Development this fall and the process will formally begin. To assist DHCD, the Virginia Building and Code Official's Association, Virginia Plumbing and Mechanical Inspector's Association, Virginia Fire Prevention Association, along with builders, contractors, architects and engineers will all be part of a process that includes reviewing proposed code changes to the model codes that reflect Virginia's interests. The whole process may take about 18 months

## BOARD OF APPEALS RECEIVES CODE UPDATE TRAINING

The City of Norfolk's Building Code Board of Appeals met at Council Chambers in April to hear information on the updates to the 2003 edition of the model codes adopted by the State of Virginia and the City of Norfolk.

Sheldon Leavett, AIA, PE, Chairman of the Board of Appeals, called the regular meeting to order. Lynn Underwood, CBO presented update information to the IBC and the IRC 2003 editions. In addition, the Board heard information related to one

of the newest codes adopted by the State. The International Existing Building Code (IEBC) has been adopted as Virginia's Rehabilitation Code.

In addition to the information on code update, the Board received some practical experience with a mock appeal. To assist, Steve Merritt, Senior Permit Specialist acted the part of an aggrieved citizen builder who wanted to build within 2'8" of the property line with-

out a fire rating on the exterior wall. Steve argued that the requirement was new and frivolous and that for the last 50 years, Virginia had never had a problem with lesser setbacks. The Board asked thought-provoking questions of the applicant and the Code Official. Similar training including mock appeals are planned to provide continuing training for the entire board.





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**Code Official in-  
vited to Capitol Hill**



Lynn Underwood, Code Official for the City of Norfolk, as a member of the International Code Council's Government Relations Advisory Committee was invited to visit with lawmakers at the U. S. Capitol during Building Safety Week. The committee met during the week of May 8th and spent an entire day meeting with Senators and Members of Congress discussing issues relating to building safety. "The focus of the meet and greet with legislators was more introductory to what codes provide society", according to Underwood. Other issues discussed included the use of the I Codes in the Department of Defense, and other Federal agencies, authorizing the I Codes use in the rebuilding of Afghanistan, as well as the Federal rebuilding projects devastated by hurricanes in Louisiana and Mississippi. Among the legislators, Underwood met with Representative Thelma Drake of Virginia's Second District to discuss building safety issues.

Departmental Vision

To integrate the best ideas from all segments of the community with innovative planning techniques in order to create a holistic framework for a vibrant and diverse community to live, work and play.

Departmental Mission

To apply the highest quality planning and reflect regulatory principles to preserve, protect and enhance Norfolk's developed and natural environments.

**DHCD News**

A published "commentary" on the administrative provisions of the Uniform Statewide Building Code is currently being discussed. Doug Murrow, Building Official with James City County is Chairman of a VBCOA Committee that is working with the Department of Housing and Community Development to produce the document. When complete, Building Safety Professionals and Builders will have access to a document that explains the meaning behind the strict letter of the code. If you have any issue that you think needs clarification, contact Doug Murrow at (757) 253-6628.

**Code Corner:**

**Q:** Do I need a permit for a small storage shed in my back yard?

**A:** Depends on the size. Section 108.2 of the USBC specifies: "Detached accessory structures used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses or similar uses, provided the floor area does not exceed 150 square feet". However, a Zoning Certificate is required to verify required setbacks. This certificate is free. Sheds larger than 150 ft<sup>2</sup> do require a permit. Plans and an application must be submitted to this office for that review.

**Q:** When do I need a handrail on a stair?

**A:** The IRC section R311.5.6 specifies that Handrails shall be provided on at least one side of each continuous run of treads or flight with four or more risers.



If you have a question for this section, e-mail it to:

[Lynn.underwood@norfolk.gov](mailto:Lynn.underwood@norfolk.gov)

## HAZARD ABATEMENT CODE DEVELOPED

An International Code Council committee is developing a brand new code. An initial draft of the Hazard Abatement Code for Existing Buildings is posted on the ICC website for your comments. Lynn Underwood, Code Official for the City of Norfolk serves as the Vice Chairman for this committee and was instrumental in the development of this code. "This code provides more clear direction to the Code Official when determining if a building has become Unsafe", he said when asked. This code adds more descriptive elements when assessing the nature of a building's safety that is provided in the Property Maintenance Code. The code contains 7 chapters that include 1) Administration, 2) Definitions, 3) Fire Resistance rated construction, 4) Fire Protection System, 5) Means of Egress, 6) Structural Integrity, 7) Health and Sanitation. The Code has several appendices as well. They include:

A) Boarding Standard, B) Ap-

peal Form Application, C) Procedure for Appeal, D) Electrical System abatement due to exposure to water and fire. Chapters 6 and 7 were authored by Norfolk staff. Underwood wrote the chapter for structural and Ralston McInnis wrote the chapter on Health and sanitation. In addition, Jeff White, Team Leader for Electrical Inspectors was instrumental in moving the concept for electrical equipment abatement due to water damage. This concept was developed and implemented originally just after Hurricane Isabel.

The HAEB Code book may be imple-

mented in Virginia in one of two ways. First, it may be adopted directly and become law as a stand-alone code book. Or second, relevant portions may be exported into the State's adoption of the Property Maintenance Code as an optional means of evaluating unsafe structures. Those with interest in the code can see the current progress at

[http://www.iccsafe.org/  
download/HAEB/](http://www.iccsafe.org/download/HAEB/)

### *Staff appointed to national committees*

*Vernell Woods and Ralston McInnis were recently appointed to the ICC International Property Maintenance Code Committee. In addition, Lynn Underwood was appointed to ICC's IRC Mechanical/Plumbing Code Committee as well. Participation on a committee at this national level enhances the City of Norfolk's opportunity to effect changes in these model codes to reflect local and State interests. Committee members work together to review proposed code changes, voting a recommendation to the membership. McInnis is Co-Chair of the State's Property Maintenance Code Committee. Woods and McInnis are Board Members and Underwood serves as Sergeant at Arms of the Virginia Building and Code Official's Association. This organization actively promotes code changes.*